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ENG 5011-001: Studies in Composition and Rhetoric: Theories and Practices of Professional Communication

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English 5011 – Studies in Composition and Rhetoric: Theories and Practice of Professional Communication

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Objectives and Overview

What is "professional communication"? Who does it, why is it important, and how does it differ from other types of communication? This course provides an overview of professional communication (PC) as a discipline for those (1) considering PC as a career, (2) planning to enter a career which will require significant amounts of writing, or (3) planning to teach some PC at the college-level. In this course, we will examine theories and trends of discourse that inform PC research and work. In addition, we will analyze and create common PC documents.

The specific objectives of this course are as follows:

- Learn theories and issues important to the field of PC
- Identify and successfully implement writing strategies and contextual issues that distinguish PC from academic and creative writing
- Develop a depth of theoretical and practical knowledge in a specific area of PC
- Apply PC concepts and theories to complete a client-based project

Texts for this Class

- *Central Works in Technical Communication*, Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart Selber
- *Handbook of Technical Writing*, 8th ed, Gerald Alred, Charles Brusaw, and Walter Oliu
- Articles on e-reserve

Assignments

Reading Responses:

During weeks 2-10, you will select one important issue from the reading assignment and briefly summarize how that issue is applied in the three articles you have read. You will then write an analysis by doing one or more of the following:

- Compare/contrast the relative strengths and weaknesses among the three articles' presentations of that issue (i.e., which is more credible, reliable, persuasive on this issue?)
- Discuss the issue in terms of concepts or articles from earlier in the course
- Compare/contrast the presentation of this issue in professional communication to its presentation in another field (e.g., composition, literature, technology, business)
- Apply the issue to your professional or academic experiences or to a real or hypothetical case

Length is not the most important issue in writing these responses. Rather, I will be looking for a thorough discussion of the issue; therefore, the length of your responses may vary.

On one occasion during the semester, you will be responsible for a 10-minute response to an article that the class has read for the day. You will summarize, comment on, and suggest an application for your chosen piece. A sign-up sheet will be available the first two weeks of class.

Weekly Projects:

In class, we will discuss practical concepts related to professional communication. You will then be asked to apply those concepts to a small-scale project. Often, you will work on and may even complete these assignments in class.

Analysis of a Document:

You will interview a professional who will help you select a document for which you can (1) trace the document's history; (2) analyze the document in terms of its intended audience, purpose, and context; and (3) project the possible impacts. You will write your analysis as a report. Plan also to informally discuss your analysis in class.

Annotated Bibliography:

In groups of three, you will research a specific topic within the field of professional communication. You will prepare an annotated bibliography (annotated means you will provide a brief summary and analysis of each source) that includes a brief introductory synthesis. Your annotated bibliography should contain a minimum of 15 sources with sources organized into sections for ease of navigation. You will share your findings orally with the class and will provide each class member with a copy of your bibliography.

Individual Project:

You will choose a project that requires you to complete one large (e.g., a manual) or several small (e.g., brochures plus flyers) pieces of professional communication. Using the guidelines from your client, you will adapt the concepts we have discussed in class to the specific audience, purpose, and context. You will submit your project along with an analysis of your decisions on the last day of class. Plan also to share your project with the class.

Midway through the semester, you will write a formal proposal to me pitching your idea for the individual project.

Grades:

Assignment	% grade
Reading Responses/Discussions	25
Weekly Projects	20
Document Analysis	10
Annotated Bibliography	20
Project Proposal	5
Individual Project	30

Attendance, Participation, and Late Work

Prompt and regular attendance, as well as active participation in class discussion and activities, are expected. Students who do not attend regularly or who do not participate in class discussions and activities can expect that their final grade will be lowered. A few specifics:

- 1st absence: Some in-class weekly project points may be lost.
- 2nd absence: The weekly projects grade will be lowered by one letter grade at the end of the semester.
- 3rd absence: The overall course grade will be lowered by one letter grade at the end of the semester.
- 4th absence: The overall course grade will again be lowered a second letter grade.

Late assignments will be docked 5% each day until they are turned in. All major assignments must be turned in to pass the course.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. The English Department states, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- 'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

ENGLISH 5011: PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

DAILY SYLLABUS

DATE	DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITY
Aug23	Read articles	Introduce course and requirements Discuss PC history
Aug 30	Read articles Write reading response	Discuss PC theory/philosophy, basic PC writing concepts Write business letter
Sep 06	Read articles Write reading response Submit business letter (Sep 04)	Discuss organizational culture, informative writing Write company policy
Sep 13	Read articles Write reading response Submit policy (Sep 11)	Discuss audience, report writing Complete audience analysis activity
Sep 20	Read articles Write reading response Submit document analysis	Discuss public discourse, PC roles, instruction writing
Sep 27	Read articles Write reading response Submit instructions (Sep 25)	Discuss differing views of PC, persuasive writing, proposals Draft project proposal
Oct 04	Read articles Write reading response Bring hypothetical/real ethical case Submit independent project proposal	Discuss ethics, specific cases, “bad news” writing Write a “bad news” letter
Oct 11	Read articles Write reading response Submit letter (Oct 09)	Discuss technology
Oct 18	Read articles Write reading response Submit weekly project (Oct 16)	Discuss research in PC
Oct 25	Read articles Write reading response Submit weekly project (Oct 23)	Discuss collaboration Form groups
Nov 01	Meet in groups with Terri	Work with groups
Nov 08	Read articles Bring sample document	Discuss document design Create document design
Nov 15	Submit annotated bibliography Submit document design (Nov 13)	Discuss progress reports Work on individual projects

Thanksgiving Break – No school

Nov 29	Bring draft (x3) of individual project Submit progress report (Nov 27)	Peer review projects
Dec 06	Submit individual project	Present projects

English 5011 Weekly Reading Assignments

August 23: The History of Professional Communication

Read the following articles:

- Connors, Robert. "The Rise of Technical Writing Instruction in America"
- Durack, Katherine. "Gender, Technology, and the History of Technical Communication"
- Rutter, Russel. History, Rhetoric, and Humanism: Toward a More Comprehensive Definition of Technical Communication

August 30: Theories and Philosophies of Professional Communication

Read three of the following articles:

- Dobrin, David. "What's Technical about Technical Writing"
- Johnson-Eilola, Johndan. "Relocating the Value of Work: Technical Communication in a Post-Industrial Age"
- Lay, Mary. "Feminist Theory and the Redefinition of Technical Communication"
- Slack, et al. "Relocating the Value of Work: Technical Communication in a Post-Industrial Age"
- Thralls, Charlotte and Nancy Blyer, "The Social Perspective and Professional Communication: Diversity and Directions in Research"

September 06: Organizational Culture and Professional Communication

Read three of the following articles:

- Driskill, Linda. "Understanding the Writing Context in Organizations"
- Hull, Glynda. "What's in a Label?: Complicating Notions of the Skills Poor Worker" [e-reserve]
- Weiland Herrick, Jeanne. "'And Then She Said': Office Stories and What They Tell Us about Gender in the Workplace" [e-reserve]
- Winsor, Dorothy. "The Construction of Knowledge in Organizations: Asking the Right Questions about the Challenger" [e-reserve]

September 13: The Audience for Professional Communication

Read three of the following articles:

- Artemeva, Natasha. "The Writing Consultant as Cultural Interpreter: Bridging Cultural Perspectives on the Genre of the Periodic Engineering Report" [e-reserve]
- Bazerman, Charles. "Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions" [e-reserve]
- Johnson, Robert. "Audience Involved: Toward a Participatory Model of Writing"
- Porter, James. "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community" [e-reserve]
- Rude, Carolyn. "The Report for Decision Making: Genre and Inquiry"

September 20: Professional Communication as Public Discourse

Read three of the following articles:

- Bowdon, Melody. "Technical Communication and the Role of the Public Intellectual: A Community HIV-Prevention Case Study" [e-reserve]
- Cushman, Ellen. "The Rhetorician as Agent of Social Change" [e-reserve]
- Ornatowski, Cezar and Linn Bekins. "What's Civic about Technical Communication? Technical Communication and the Rhetoric of 'Community'" [e-reserve]
- Reeves, Carol. "Establishing a Phenomenon: The Rhetoric of Early Medical Reports on AIDS [e-reserve]

September 27: Whose Values Count in Professional Communication?

Read three of the following articles:

- Herndl, Carl. "Teaching Discourse and Reproducing Culture: A Critique of Research and Pedagogy in Professional and Non-Academic Writing"
- Miller, Carolyn, "A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing"
- Russell, David. "The Ethics of Teaching Ethics in Professional Communication" [e-reserve]
- Weiss, Timothy. "Reading Culture: Professional Communication as Translation" [e-reserve]

October 04: Ethical and Legal Issues in Professional Communication

Read three of the following articles:

- Bryan, John. "Down the Slippery Slope: Ethics and the Technical Writer as Marketer" [e-reserve]
- Dragga, Sam. "A Question of Ethics: Lessons from Technical Communicators on the Job [e-reserve]
- Katz, Steven. "The Ethic of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust"
- Porter, James. "The Role of Law, Policy, and Ethics in Corporate Composing: Toward a Practical Ethics for Professional Writing" [e-reserve]
- Sullivan, "Dale. "Political-Ethical Implications of Defining Technical Communication as Practice"

October 11: Technology in Professional Communication

Read three of the following articles:

- Bernhardt, Stephen. "The Shape of Texts to Come: The Texture of Print on Screens"
- Howard, Tharon. "Who 'Owns' Electronic Texts?"
- Mirel, Barbara. "Writing and Database Technology: Extending the Definition of Writing in the Workplace"
- Selber, Stuart. "Beyond Skill Building: Challenges Facing Technical Communication Teachers in the Computer Age"
- Selfe, Cynthia and Richard Selfe, Jr. "The Politics of the Interface: Power and its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones"

October 18: Research in Professional Communication

Read three of the following articles:

- Blakeslee, Ann and Spilka, Rachel. "The State of Research in Technical Communication" [e-reserve]
- Blyler, Nancy. "Taking a Political Turn: The Critical Perspective and Research in Professional Communication"
- Charney, Davida. "Empiricism is not a Four-Letter Word"***
- Harrison, Teresa. "Frameworks for the Study of Writing in Organizational Contexts"
- Sullivan, Patricia and James Porter. "On Theory, Practice, and Method: Toward a Heuristic Research Methodology for Professional Writing"

*** On e-reserve, you can find a brief dialogue (read: argument) between Marilyn Cooper and Davida Charney regarding Charney's article.

October 25: Collaboration in Professional Communication

Read the following articles:

- Allen, Nancy, et al. "What Experienced Collaborators Say about Collaborative Writing"
- Bosley, Deborah. "Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?"
- Burnett, Rebecca. "Conflict in Collaborative Decision-Making" [e-reserve]

November 08: Visual Communication

Read the following articles:

- Barton, Ben and Marthalee Barton. "Ideology and the Map: Toward a Postmodern Visual Design Practice"
- Kostelnick, Charles. "The Rhetoric of Text Design in Professional Communication"